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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

March 1985

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are Eunice Charles, Nancy Drexler, Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, Greta Holtz, Kenneth Liberstein, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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East/Central Africa

Tanzania
09/03/85

Tanzania decides to join the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), an economic community of eastern and southern African countries. The PTA's goal is to restructure the trade of member countries away from rich industrial nations by increasing regional trade.

Uganda
08/03/85

The National Resistance Army (NRA) issues a statement claiming to have killed 400 government troops and captured huge quantities of arms in operations between last Christmas and mid-February. The NRA claims that on New Year's Day, 600 NRA guerrillas, led by Yoweri Museveni, attacked the Kabamba Infantry School and barracks in Mubende district. Government troops fled and the NRA looted the barracks and armory, seizing over 460 rifles, ammunition, grenades, and mortars. According to the statement, the "Luwero Triangle," where NRA guerrillas are active, has become a rectangle, now extending west into Kyaka district and north of Kampala as far as Ngoma and into the East Mengo district. The accuracy of these reports cannot be verified.

16/03/85

Reports of large-scale political murders surface again. Ugandan newspapers report that the bodies of 61 people, murdered by unknown assailants, have been found at 3 sites near Kampala. The newspaper of the opposition Democratic Party says that 20 people, believed to have been detainees, were taken in an army truck to a site north of Kampala and shot to death.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia
00/03/85

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) reports inflicting heavy casualties on government forces in several clashes during March. The fighting occurred in Tigray and Gonder Provinces and in an area along the border between Tigray and Gonder. One battle reportedly lasted 6 days. These reports cannot be verified. American aid workers report a 7-hour battle at Lalibela on 2-3 March, in which the government retained the upper hand. Diplomats believe the heavy fighting is the result of a government offensive to dislodge guerrillas from bases near the main north-south highway.

17/03/85

The secretaries general of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Somali Abo Liberation Front (SALF) meet

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to discuss cooperation between the two fronts in fighting the Ethiopian Government.

01/04/85 An "Eritrean official," quoted by Qatar News Agency, claims that high-level EPLF and Ethiopian government delegations are meeting in Aden to discuss resolving the Eritrean conflict. He maintains that the EPLF is meeting with the Ethiopians in order to undermine the newly formed Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) which unites all the other Eritrean factions. This report cannot be verified and may only be an attempt by the ELF to discredit the EPLF.

Somalia

00/03/85 Clandestine Radio Halgan reports attacks by the Democratic Front for Somali Salvation (DFSS) on five government bases and several ambushes on military vehicles during March. The attacks took place in Galguduud, Mudug, and Nugaal regions. These reports cannot be verified. The radio station does not report any military operations by the Somali National Movement (SNM) during the month.

Sudan

00/03/85 Riots over increases in the price of bread, gasoline, and basic commodities erupt in Khartoum. The inadequate supply of these goods, the partial withdrawal of government subsidies, and the suspension of American assistance are the underlying causes of the disturbances. The demonstrations are confined to the capital city, and Sudanese security forces effectively control the situation.

04/03/85 US Vice President George Bush arrives in Sudan to commence a 4-day visit with President Jafa'ar Numeiri. Discussions focus particularly on the war in southern Sudan, the state of the domestic economy, the reforms needed to obtain economic assistance from the United States and the International Monetary Fund, and the evacuation of the remaining Falashas detained in the Sudan. The visit is relatively successful in terms of confirming American support for a beleaguered Sudanese state and persuading Numeiri of the need for concessions and moderation in the implementation of his policies.

12/03/85 President Numeiri expels from his government and imprisons several members of the Muslim Brotherhood, notably Dr. Hassan al Turabi, the President's advisor on foreign policy,

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and Yassin Omar al Imam, chairman of the Sudanese Socialist Union. These Muslim Brotherhood figures, who had assumed key positions in the inner government last year, were the primary catalysts for the drive towards the implementation of Islamic law. The move by the Sudanese leader was taken shortly after the visit of Vice President Bush in an attempt to mollify the United States and lay the groundwork for Numeiri's upcoming visit to Washington. It also typifies Numeiri's policy of balancing power among disparate coalitions.

24/03/85 US aircraft evacuate the remaining Ethiopian Jews detained in the Gadaref refugee camps near the Ethiopian-Sudanese border. The final leg of "Operation Moses" is negotiated and approved during the recent visit of Vice President Bush to Sudan. Numeiri's agreement to permit the airlift, despite Arab opposition to measures which indirectly aid Israel, contributed to the resumption of American economic assistance which had been suspended in February.

Indian Ocean Islands

Comoros

14/03/85 The Comoran Government announces that a coup attempt has been foiled. According to government sources, soldiers of the presidential guard and some civilians tried to carry out a coup while President Ahmed Abdallah Abderemane was in France on a private visit. All the plotters have been imprisoned and the situation has normalized. The Abdallah regime has been in power since 1978.

Madagascar

26/02/85 The Soviet Union sends Madagascar a consignment of spare parts to maintain the 2 Yak-40 planes of the Malagasy Naval Air Force, as well as a credit to maintain the 6 heavy helicopters and the 12 MiG-21 fighter planes which are part of the Malagasy Air Force. Following the training last year in the Soviet Union of 74 Malagasy specialists, no more than 6 Soviet experts are working at the naval air base of Ivato, near Antananarivo. Soviet military aid to Madagascar, while not as great as the amounts given to Mozambique or Angola, continues to be significant to Madagascar's Armed Forces.

Sahel

Chad

10/03/85 President Hissen Habre accuses Libya of reinforcing its position in the north and vows to see all Libyan troops

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removed from Chad. Habre also makes an unprecedented tour through southern Chad where he holds talks with several local canton chiefs in an attempt to show his commitment to national unification and reconciliation. The trip is seen as successful, based on large turnouts and claims of increasing numbers of rebels rallying to the side of the Habre government.

Southern Africa

Angola

05/03/85 UNITA soldiers claim credit for the death of 16 Cuban and 69 Angolan troops as a result of guerrilla actions staged in the region of Locala in northern Angola. According to rebel sources, two battalions of government troops and one composed of Cuban soldiers were engaged in the combat. Later in the month, UNITA announces that its guerrillas have shot down a MiG-21 aircraft, killing its Cuban pilot.

19/03/85 According to government sources, 17 UNITA rebels are killed by FAPLA (Peoples Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola) forces during offensive operations launched on 4 and 5 March in Bie and Lunda Norte Provinces. During the clashes, the FAPLA combatants seized large quantities of war materiel and documents, according to the communique.

Mozambique

09/03/85 Following accusations that Portuguese businessmen based in Portugal are providing economic and material aid to RENAMO, the Portuguese Prime Minister assures Mozambican Foreign Minister Joaquim Chissano that Lisbon will end such interference.

Mozambique/South
Africa

14/03/85 Two senior South African Cabinet members, Foreign Minister Roelof F. Botha and Defense Minister Magnus Malan, fly to Mozambique to meet with Mozambican officials and reaffirm their support for the Nkomati Accord. The collapse of the accord would be viewed as a diplomatic failure for South Africa, since it is a cornerstone of South Africa's efforts to assert its position as the dominant regional power and to undermine its exiled foes.

16/03/85 On the first anniversary of the Nkomati Accord, RENAMO sabotages power lines and causes a widespread power outage

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in Mozambique's capital, Maputo. South Africa, after having established that individuals in Johannesburg have been printing counterfeit currency to pay for smuggled goods from Mozambique, sets up radar along the Mozambique-South African border to monitor unscheduled flights. The continuing activity by RENAMO has caused tension between the Mozambican and South African Governments and could be a serious threat to the success of the Nkomati Accord.

South Africa

- 28/02/85 Dennis Goldberg, South Africa's senior white political prisoner, is released from prison after serving 21 years of a life sentence for his activities with the African National Congress. Goldberg, 55, who is released on the condition that he leave South Africa, flies to Israel to join his daughter. Goldberg was arrested in 1962 and convicted and sentenced in 1964 on charges of making bombs for the anti-apartheid underground.
- 14/03/85 Organizations representing the employers of 80 percent of the workers in South Africa's commerce, industry and mining sectors urge President P. W. Botha to give "visible expression" to the promises of reform he made 6 weeks ago. The joint statement by six business associations is the second move by South African business leaders in a week pressing the government to implement reforms to counter the growing campaign in the US for divestiture. Earlier, several leading businessmen called for reform in speeches at a meeting of the South Africa Foundation.
- 19/03/85 The South African Defence Force project to erect an electrified fence and wall along South Africa's border with Zimbabwe between Beit Bridge and Sand River will be completed by the end of March, according to Deputy Minister of Defence Adrian Vlok. The project is part of an experiment with the use of barriers to facilitate border control. The cost of the project is 2.5 million rand.
- 20/03/85 Reverend Allan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, is reinstated as pastor of his local congregation after church elders dismiss reports that he had been embroiled in an adulterous relationship. The case arose in January when a newspaper reported that the security police had tried to discredit Reverend Boesak by disseminating tape recordings purporting to provide evidence of adultery.

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Southern Africa

South Africa

- 21/03/85 Police open fire on a crowd of some 4,000 blacks near the southeast coastal town of Uitenhage, killing at least 19. The incident came on the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. The crowd was headed from the black township of Langa to Kwanobuhle, Uitenhage's other black township, to attend a service for 3 people killed in a clash with police 10 days earlier. Witnesses said policemen in an armored vehicle opened fire after the crowd refused to disperse. The police use of automatic rifles and shotguns instead of less lethal riot control equipment is being investigated. The killing, which brought the death toll from 13 months of unrest to 242, coincided with demonstrations in Sharpeville itself, where black youths boycotted classes and stoned cars and buses.
- 21/03/85 Some 40,000 black gold miners undertake a day-long illegal strike at the Vaal Reefs mine near Klerksdorp, 120 miles west of Johannesburg, to demand higher wages. A spokesman for the Anglo-American Corporation, which owns the mine, states that the stoppage is the biggest recorded at a single mine. Vaal Reefs is the largest gold mine in the world.
- 26/03/85 South African police arrest 239 civil rights demonstrators, including 3 prominent churchmen, during a march on Parliament protesting the killing by police of 19 blacks in eastern Cape Province. Among those arrested are Allan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; C.F. Beyers Naude, the country's leading Afrikaner dissident and General Secretary of the Council of Churches; Archbishop Denis Hurley, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in southern Africa; and Sheena Duncan, President of the Black Sash. All had attended a memorial service for the people killed at Uitenhage in a Methodist church in Cape Town.
- 30/03/85 The South African Government bans the country's largest multi-racial political movement, the United Democratic Front (UDF), and 28 allied organizations from holding meetings for the next 3 months. A proclamation issued by Minister of Law and Order Louis le Grange makes it a crime for anyone to encourage protest strikes or school boycotts. At the same time, 24 members of the UDF are detained by security police in the Ciskei homeland.

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Zimbabwe
01/03/85

Security forces hold 1,282 people for questioning during a major operation in Bulawayo from 1-3 March. Some 7,000-8,000 troops and police are used in the operation, which involved cordoning off the townships where some 400,000 people live. The operation's stated aim was to curb politically motivated violence after the recent killing of two members of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party in clashes with supporters of the opposition Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). However, ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo said on 3 March that the security operation was meant to demoralize his supporters and reduce his vote in the general election scheduled for June.

West Africa

Guinea
18/03/85

The Guinean Government decides to dissolve the militia, one of the main props of the former regime of President Sekou Toure. The 9,000-man militia, which was controlled directly by the ruling party under Toure, will be split between different sections of the army. The armed forces are also to be reorganized by such measures as the modernization of military camps and the introduction of a military identity card.

Guinea-Bissau

12/03/85

A delegation from Guinea-Bissau headed by Iafai Camara arrived in Teheran for talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. The focus of this meeting, the first since the revolution in Iran, is related to the expansion of mutual relations and cooperation in the Nonaligned Movement and in international organizations.

Ivory Coast

28/02/85

Maintenance staff--including drivers, gardeners, and messengers--at the national university strike to protest actual and anticipated salary cuts. The job action represents one more manifestation of dissatisfaction on the part of workers in parastatal corporations (including the university) whose earnings are being brought into line with the substantially lower wages of government workers.

00/03/85

A scandal involving Emmanuel Diolou, mayor of Abidjan and a possible successor to Houphouet-Boigny, unfolds when Cogexim, the corporation which Dioulou heads, refuses to repay as much as \$32 million which a local bank claims to

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have loaned him. Following a preliminary investigation, the two top officers of the bank are sacked for permitting irregularities in the loans to COGEXIM. Dioulou himself then flees--some suggest is allowed to flee--to Belgium when further investigation turns up evidence of fraud on an atypically large scale.

08/03/85 Defense Minister Konan Banny emphasizes to a large and often protesting crowd of parastatal workers that the government can no longer treat them differently from government civil servants. Government measures to reduce salaries--in cases by as much as 75 percent--will affect as many as 30,000 workers in 59 parastatal corporations. Some 16,000 parastatal employees without civil servant rank will be reclassified as temporary government workers without job security.

Liberia

05/03/85 A former US Marine, recuperating in a Monrovia hospital, is formally charged with "mercenarism" in connection with an alleged coup plot against Head of State Samuel K. Doe in November 1984. The American, William Woodhouse, was shot by security forces while allegedly planning the coup.

Nigeria

11/03/85 After spending almost a year in jail, Nigerian journalists Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor are released some 30 hours before the official time of release, presumably to pre-empt planned demonstrations of support. The two had been jailed for violating a controversial decree interdicting news accounts which authorities consider "embarrassing." During the detention both the International Press Institute and Amnesty International actively adopted the journalists' cause.

Sao Tome

27/02/85 Reflecting an ongoing discontent within the Sao Tome Government, President Pinto da Costa dismisses Foreign Minister Maria do Nascimento da Garcia Amorim and Planning Minister Agapito Mendes Dias. Sources do not provide specific reasons for the dismissals; however, Madame Amorim is thought to be a particularly outspoken critic of US foreign policy. The President, already Prime Minister, has taken on the two portfolios himself. Former Ambassador to Portugal Francisco Fortunato Pires has been named Minister of Justice, and Guillherme Posser da Costa has been

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appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to complete the shake-up.